

referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

1630

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1824

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 1824.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ST. PETER'S MASS HOSTED BY REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, today's mass at St. Peter's will be hosted by the Republican Conference. The homily will be given by the House Chaplain and he will speak in support of the H.R. 4199, to abolish the Tax Code by the year 2004. Does that sound ridiculous to my colleagues? It sure does to me as a Catholic Member of this House.

But let me review for my colleagues what transpired yesterday. There was a mass at St. Peter's hosted by the Republican National Committee to honor and to introduce the new chaplain of the House followed by a reception in the church basement.

We were told that all Members were invited to mass. But in reality, only 26 Republicans were given the invitation.

Mr. Speaker, masses have been conducted in this world by Catholic clergy for centuries; and never, never in my recollection have they been hosted by a political party.

I think it is wrong. I think it is misdirected. And I am told at the mass itself speaking to the congregation was the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Mr. Nicholson, and a former Member of this House who headed up the campaign committee.

I think the Republicans have gone too far this time. For those of my colleagues who do not know the background, the chaplain of the House announced he was retiring. The Speaker appointed a bipartisan Search Committee made up of nine Republicans and nine Democrats to find a new chaplain. They interviewed 37 clergymen, and they came up with the top choice of a Catholic priest.

But that was not to be. The Republicans would not stand still for a Catholic, the first in the history of this country to be chaplain of this House.

So they bypassed him for the man who came in number three. Then a big uproar occurred.

Catholics throughout the country were just totally up in arms, and they knew they were going to lose the Catholic vote this November. So what do they do? They bring a resolution to the floor praising the Catholic schools.

I am a product of that Catholic education. I do not need my Republican colleagues telling me how good the education is. They kept slipping with the Catholics. Then they found Cardinal O'Connor in New York. So one day we had a resolution to give him a gold medal and that still did not help the slippage with the Catholic vote.

So then the Speaker swallowed his pride and he himself appointed a Catholic priest from Chicago who was not interviewed by the committee but he was a Catholic, and he thought that would stop the hemorrhage of the loss of the Catholic vote; and everything was quiet for a couple weeks and we started to heal. And then, out of the blue, comes a mass at St. Peter's sponsored by the Republican National Committee.

Mr. Speaker, today the only word that my colleagues could come up with was this is "disgusting." The Catholic celebration of mass does not need promotion from my colleagues, guys. We go there voluntarily. If it was the Democratic party pulling this nonsense, I would be on this floor tonight.

When is this going to stop? Are they going to ridicule my entire religion? Have they bought into the notion from Bob Jones University that we are a cult, that the Pope is anti-Christ?

In the press reports today on this debacle, we are told by a spokesman for the Republican National Committee that he is sorry that some Democrats were finding fault with this event, with this "event."

The mastermind who they dusted off, a former ambassador to the Vatican, stated in this article, I have been to events sponsored by lots of organizations, including Democrats, and there has never been any problem.

Is this an event? Is this like a college football bowl game where there is a sponsor, the Rose Bowl is brought to us by Microsoft, today's mass is brought to us by some foundation?

Mr. Speaker, the Republicans in the House have gone over the line. I have asked the Catholic Bishop's Conference to review this matter. I believe that what they have done is turn this Catholic chaplain into a Republican poster-priest.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ANSWERS FROM NATIONAL READING PANEL ON AMERICAN CHILDREN'S READING LEVELS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Ms. NORTHUP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is an important day for all of our schoolchildren and all of our children across this country.

When I came to Congress 3½ years ago, the rate of children that could not even read at basic level in our schools across this country was 40 percent. Forty percent of all schoolchildren in the fourth grade could not even read at basic levels.

Clearly, as we have poured resources, we have poured time and attention and research into making sure our children all learn to read, we were missing the mark with some our children.

I am sure all of us do not need to be reminded how important it is that children learn to read. They learn to read first in kindergarten and first grade so that they can go on about in fourth grade to other things: science, health, geography, social studies, all other subjects that require good reading skills.

We also know from research that if a child does not learn to read by the beginning of fourth grade, there is a very strong probability that that child will never learn to read at their capacity. Because, in those early years, children are at the stage of brain development where they can learn to read, learn to read quickly, and accurately, learn fluency, and learn to put what they see on the written page into understanding ideas and convert it and learn that information.

That is a time in their lives where they are particularly adept at that; and if they miss that opportunity, they are going to find it very difficult at any age and with any amount of work to learn to read at their capacity.

So it is a serious problem in this country that we confront today as so many of our children miss this time in their lives when they learn to read.

We know that everybody means for children to read, and we believe that all children can learn at a high level. And so, it was important that we ask the question, what are we doing that is not right? What are we missing? The questions that need to be answered are, how do children learn to read? At what age do children go through the stages of learning to read? We need to know at what time we need to intervene when children are not going through those stages and are not learning to read as we hope they will. And what kind of intervention works best?